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A Study Of The Holy As An Aesthetic Phenomenon

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They must stand like the shepherd, outlasting,  
from afar it may seem that he mourns,  
coming nearer one feels how he watches.

Rilke

dedicated to the shepherds of Being

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### Purpose Of This Thesis

The purpose of this thesis is to ascertain just exactly what is the spirit which embodies itself in the visual experiences of the holy, and isolate those visual categories for the sake of constructing artifacts.

## Introduction

Lastly, although there was no definite religious sentiment mingled with it, there was a continual perception of the Sanctity in the whole of nature, from the slightest thing to the vastest; an instinctive awe, mixed with delight; an indefinable thrill, such as we sometimes imagine to indicate the presence of a disembodied spirit. I could only feel this perfectly when I was alone; and then it would often make me shiver from head to foot with joy and fear of it, when after being some time away from the hills I first got to the shore of a mountain river, where brown water circled among the pebbles, or when I first saw the swell of distant land against the sunset, or the first low broken wall, covered with mountain moss. I cannot in the least describe the feeling; but I do not think that it is my fault, not that of the English language, for I am afraid no feeling is describable. If we had to explain even the sense of bodily hunger to a person who has never felt it, we should be hard put to it for words; and the joy in nature seemed to me to come of a sort of heart-hunger, satisfied with the presence of a Great and Holy Spirit.... These feelings remained in their full intensity till I was eighteen or twenty, and then, as the reflective and practical power increased, and the cares of this world gained upon me, faded gradually away, in the manner described by Wordsworth in his "Intimations of Immortality".

John Ruskin

( as quoted in Modern Painters, popular edition, ed. George Allen, vol. iii, p. 309 )

If we are to have any transcendence today, even Christian, it must be in and through the secular. If we are to have any mystery it must be the lay mystery. If we are to find grace it is to be found in the world and not overhead. The sublime firmament of overhead reality that provided a spiritual home for the souls of men until the eighteenth century has collapsed. But this need be no loss. I take it that we have been learning this from Bonhoeffer and Gogarten among others. We must take the world more seriously, nature and our nature more seriously, history more seriously.

But all this means that the artists and poets are more important to us even than before. Not because they preserve for us -- as was it first thought -- a refuge for the dreams and ideals threatened by materialism. But because the artist properly deals with the givens, the primordial givens, of the senses, the affections and the passions. These still have their transcendence; even in a one-story world these still have their theological import. And in the modern situation this becomes all the more significant; now the believer and the artist are dealing with the same single reality, and the artist is freer in handling it. By virtue of his craft and his embattled autonomy, he presents the voices of nature more directly. The theologian cannot enter so freely into the modern reality, nor can the conventional religious artist identified with the art sacre of the past, for they suffer the curvature and stiffness of an ancient dualistic gesture. Here is the context of Cocteau's phrase. Protesting to the theologian Maritain, Cocteau says that the artist must deal with the lay mystery and that to deal with it he must be free. But this does not mean that such art will be immoral or amoral, for, he writes: "I believe that art reflects morals, and that one cannot renew oneself without living dangerously and attracting slander." That is, the artist must deal at first hand with life, beyond the fences of social or religious propriety.

It is something like this that Wallace Stevens means when he says of the poet or artist today:

The ephebe is solitary in his walk.  
He skips the journalism of subjects,  
seeks out  
The perquisites of sanctity, enjoys

A strong mind in a weak neighborhood,  
and is  
A serious man without the serious...



He is neither priest nor proctor...

It is a fresh spiritual that he defines...

.....

The actual landscape with its actual horns  
of baker and butcher blowing, as if to hear,  
Hear hard, gets an essential integrity.

...Let us say first, then, that the theologian  
can well put himself to school to the modern art-  
ist to free himself from hang-overs of old fashions  
in transcendence. He must do this not only with a  
view to better strategies in communication, but  
with a view to honesty: honesty of feeling as well  
as honesty of language. It is a question of where  
today Grace is actually to be found -- in the old  
habits and rhetorics or, as Stevens puts it, in

The actual landscape with its actual horns  
Of baker and butcher blowing.

To avoid misunderstanding we might say that  
these horns of the butcher and baker relate us  
more directly to the ram's horns of the Exodus  
and the Seven Trumpets of the Apocalypse than do  
ecclesiastical electrical chimes or Christmas  
carols piped through loudspeakers in our shopping  
centers. The horns of the butcher and baker are  
not, of course, the Gospel, but they are real.  
Stevens is talking about the primordial givens of  
our human nature and experience, and these have  
"perquisites of sanctity," genuine coruscations  
of glory.

Now we go one step farther. If the artist  
often calls theology and piety back to an "ess-  
ential integrity," one can say that art as a whole,  
the aesthetic order, is always an indispensable  
corrective and nourishment to faith. Recurrently  
threatened by docetism and irrelevance, the Christ-  
ian faith is in need of recurrent baptism in the  
secular, in the human, to renew itself. It has to  
be continually reimmersed in the vitalities of nature  
to be saved from a spurious and phantom Christ. Art  
mediates this order of creation to us.

Amos Wilder

( "Art and Theological Meaning", from, "The New  
Orpheus, essays toward a Christian poetic," ed:  
Nathan A. Scott, Sheed and Ward, pp. 407 - 409,  
1964 )

A Study Of The Holy As An Aesthetic Phenomenon

## Section I

### The Holy Is A Presence

The holy is a presence. The holy is not an essence or a person. A person may be an 'it' or a 'thou' (other) to me. A person as an 'it' is an object, i.e., third person (he, she, it). A person as a 'thou' ( or other ) is a presence to me, i.e., second person (you). 'Holy' is the proper name for the presence of the One who is perfectly, or 'Totally Other' than me. This One is so perfect and so Other that His otherness is second person and third person to me at the same time (i.e., He is both transcendent and immanent to me ). This 'Totally Other' is the power of holiness. Holiness is His presence to me as other. Holiness is the power of otherness which resides in all I-thou relationships. All I-thou relationships communicate a sense of ultimate rightness to the extent that they are integral -- i.e., to the extent that they are open to the holy. Only the One, who is 'Totally Other', is the power of His own presence.

The holy has been improperly extended in conventional language to include certain relationships which people have with other beings as objects. For the sake of understanding the holy we shall have to disentangle some of the conventional errant meanings associated with it. The holy is a relationship of otherness or thouness only. Certain situations

because of their proximity to the holy have come to be seen as holy in themselves. Rituals of worship and divine commandments are such instances. Whether or not I kept the external prescription of the commandment or ritual became the condition by which I became holy. The legislation became the end of my activity ( rather than being only a method to develop my otherness ). Practically speaking I placed myself in an I-it relationship to the law and it became my god. Legislation, such as the Hebraic Decalogue, is to be a methodology by which I may form my sensitivity so as to be capable of greater otherness. Holiness belongs only to the One who is 'Totally Other'. We can partake in holiness to the extent that we become 'for-others'. A thing is never holy since it has no otherness by which holiness might be established. Even a person in a relationship of otherness cannot be said to be holy. A person in such a relationship has simply afforded the chance to the One of extending His presence to that particular level of creation. Holiness is not something that resides in things. A situation can only be said to be manifesting holiness when it is in the actual process of being open to the Totally Other's presence. The presence of the Other is a process which is called holy. This particular process is what Martin Buber calls the 'I-thou relationship'. Art, to the extent that it is an I-thou methodology rather than an I-it methodology,

is a means of theophany ( bringing the One to presence ).

I am interested in developing openness to the presence of otherness by art. Art is by no means a new method for this purpose. In fact, since the beginning of time we see art as the main method by which man developed this openness. We generally find the start of civilizations marked with art that exhibits the marks of the holy. But as the civilization 'matures' ( and becomes 'classical' ) we find fewer instances of otherness in what it produces as art. There is something sacred and savagely primordial about art formed by thouness which is excluded from the life of a 'matured' civilization. Art as a method of otherness is a consecration of personal being to ultimate Being, otherness, and transcendence. It is a pilgrimage, i.e., never being satisfied with the temporal because of the ultimate. Art is a spirituality, not a mere decorative craft, and the ultimate ordering principle for living with other beings ( social existence ) not a mere product in service to the leisure time activities of an it-culture. Once the holy is no longer evolved into a culture as the *raison d'etre* of all that is, it exists there only as a caricature of otherness. The covenant between Being and being has been broken by acting other than other. Art that is not

in the service of otherness is in the service of some I-it relationship. The I-it relationship that the art is mediating may be a specific religious or cultural ideology, or a manner of living without a relationship to otherness, such as the bourgeois.

I-it relationships have generally governed the way man has moved in the world. Man has been unwilling to permit other beings to reveal their otherness socially if it obstructed his domination. At first men only subjected non-human beings to the crudity of his lust for power, but as technology advanced in the service of temporal manipulation he also raped the higher beings. As such the beings of the world have advanced man's manipulative ( i.e., tool making ) capabilities, but not man's being ( his humanity ). Consequently we witness that man has not evolved as a human being yet in the tool-making stage of his development. He has better tools and control than had his ape ancestor, but the way in which he applies them is still the same. Instead of solving communication difficulties by ritualistic means man resorts to mass murder and 'character assassination'.

Itness has so overtaken the way in which the world is run that thouness has almost entirely lost a social dimension. The 'man-product' of the it-culture has not

developed the capacity for otherness which lies residually in all being. Otherness is almost totally forgotten as is the means of developing it. Itness has so thoroughly been encultured into our methods of dealing with the beings of this world that the men born in the great it-cultures may be culturally incapable of otherness. The resort to violence for the implementation of humanized reforms in our social system seems a mark of our inability to be other. Radical creativity and initiative seem to be detriments to anyone who aspires to prominence in our social systems. Manipulation of the elements of the status-quo seems to be the only desirable talent in the great it-systems -- whether these be systems of politics, religion, philosophy, or art.

People who have managed a social dimension of otherness are considered strange, or at best naive by the it-cultures. The it-culture finds worth in the other-dimensioned as diversion and illustration only. The other-dimensioned people are turned into either 'entertainment' or 'subversive elements' by the stereotypes of the it-culture. Otherness is not used in the running of an it-culture and as such it is 'irrelevant'. When some person of deep humanity is born upon the it-culture's horizon he is either despised, neglected, or accorded such stereotyped

honors that he is rendered socially ineffective by being 'above' others. Those people who wish a cultural dimension for their otherness must debase and characterize it for the sake of complying with the leisure-time entertainment wants of the culture... a world of grotesque and modulated stereotypes.

There is no diminishing the tendency of counter-cultural dissent to fall prey to the neutralization that can come from false attention. Those who dissent have to be supremely resourceful to avoid getting exhibited in somebody's commercial showcase -- rather like bizarre fauna brought back alive from the jungle wilds ... by Time, by Esquire, by David Susskind. On such treacherous terrain, the chances of miscalculation are immense. Bob Dylan, who laments the nightmarish corruptions of the age, nevertheless wears his material thin grinding out a million-dollar album a year for Columbia -- which is more apt to find its way to the shelf beside a mahogany stereophonic radio-phono console in suburbia than to any bohemian garret.... From such obfuscation of genuine dissenting talent, it isn't far to go before the counter-culture finds itself swamped with cynical or self-deceived opportunists who become, or conveniently let themselves be turned into, spokesmen for youthful disaffiliation. Accordingly, we now have clothing designers, hairdressers, fashion magazine editors, and a veritable phalanx of pop stars who, without a thought in their heads their PR man did not put there, are suddenly expounding "the philosophy of today's rebellious youth" for the benefit of the Sunday supplements...the feature to be sandwiched between a report on luxury underwear and a full-color spread on the latest undiscovered skin-diving paradise at which to spend that summer of a lifetime. And then for good reason, the counter culture begins to look like nothing so much as a world-wide publicity stunt...

Theodore Roszak

( The Making of a Counter Culture , pp. 70,71,72;  
Anchor Books of Doubleday and Co., 1969 )



The it-culture still feels some twinge for otherness even though it does not recognize it as such. This latent need for otherness is socially expressed in the it-culture's superstitious attachment to what it supposes art and religion to be. Because of this need of the it-culture we find 'holy men' who are not other-dimensioned, and artists who are incompetent of anything more than illustration. Both of these superstitious parodies of other-directedness serve the function of assuring the it-culture that whatever it does it is approved of by the predominant god. Witness the number of churchmen who take the sides of whatever nation they are employed by in wars rather than the side of Being which speaks against all war.

When we speak of otherness we are able to bestow the title of priest or artist only on those men who mediate it to others. The artist and the priest are the mediators of Being to beings. It is no accident that the artist and priest were fused into one role at the beginning of time. Indeed, it seems as if Being meant the priest to be first an artist. It is only because we have been culturally and historically conditioned that we accept the separation of these roles. It is only because society is not other-directed that we believe it is possible to have either religion or art in the ministry of these men. These cultural

functionaries mediate only that which is considered safe for the it-culture and what is considered safe contains very little if any genuine otherness.

This thesis deals with otherness and the way in which man has constructed particular visual methodologies for its evocation. I am not interested in those artworks that relate to the holy as an it. We have a long line of art that is in the service of dogmas rather than the holy. Art that serves to illustrate dogma is not religious art properly called. ( Although art may indeed serve both dogma and the holy if the ordering principle for the work is the holy which just happens to take the form pertinent to a particular dogma.) Religion is a virtue which requires dedication based on love. Dogma requires adherence on the basis of its rationalness. what I can explain is knowledge, what I believe is faith. To have religion one must first have otherness. Art that is in the service of otherness is religious by its nature.

Art history has generally done an unsatisfactory job of mediating that which is specifically religious ( i.e., otherness ) in art. This is due in part to the positivistic stance most history takes. To explore the holy as a visual phenomenon we will have to consult those people who have mediated

otherness. These people are the mystics, the writers of the great religious books, poets, philosophers, etc. The artists have generally been with man through recent history but the philosophers of otherness are new to the scene. After almost three thousand years of thinking about being to the exclusion of Being philosophy has again taken up its primeval task of evolving Being into man's language and thought. Because the thinkers of Being are finally here there is some glimmer of hope that perhaps now otherness can take one more step closer to becoming socially incarnate.

## Section II

### Otherness Demands Altogetherness For Presence

Man is essentially the being which is corespondent with Being. Man is not his own end, sufficient unto himself. He is the "shepherd of Being"; he "belongs to Being"; he exists solely "for the sake of Being". He is "called by Being" in order that Being may reveal itself to him, and "apart from this truth of Being man himself does not matter". It is Heidegger's conviction that man's dignity, his greatest glory, lies simply in his abiding as the locus of Being's self-revelation. Man's true vocation is to be contemplative. Instead he has become a mere user-of-things.

Giles Driscoll

( "Heidegger: A Response To Nihilism", Philosophy Today, Vol. XI, no.1, p. 21, 1967 )

Originally art was used as a method of exorcising the dread early man felt before the Other. Early man felt the weight of Being in almost everything. He felt it in storms, rivers, forests, animals, strangers, the night. Early man saw everything as having a personality. He saw storms as theophanic manifestations of a powerful being's will. He believed that the brooding darkness of the primeval forests was a mark of the forest's sullen spirit watching him. Violence punctuated early man's life delineating his feeling of contingency on a higher power. Man sought to gain some control over the actions of this higher power by ritualistic appeasement. The natural dread that

the primeval surroundings evoked in man was proof enough of the existence of this all-powerful being. To appease, and so control, the all-powerful Other man fashioned a unique manner of communication. The dread felt before the presence of the Other laid man's soul naked and evoked a natural, automatic, and necessary response from man. This response was art. An art which was evoked by the Presence of the Other from the deepest core of man's being. The dread of the Other was exorcised from early man's awe-struck soul in a natural recoiling action which produced an external form -- an artifact. Man felt a natural necessity to distance himself from the presence of the dreadful by art. Ordinary language could not expel the Other's presence because it could not grasp the essential nature of dread, namely, otherness. Art was not only able to enter into a relationship of otherness, but was automatically evoked by dread. Art was a primordially fashioned method of communication that allowed man and the Other to respond to each other's presence.

But man gradually became aware that he could exorcise the presence of the Other in another manner. Man found that he could exorcise otherness from his own being thus being incapable of experiencing the dread he so feared. The Other came suddenly without

apparent warning. The Other's presence in dread was either there or not, and if it was there it was there in the full strength of its dreadfulness. Man, contrariwise, was not always 'altogether'. Man's consciousness was extended over the plurality of his daily affairs. His consciousness was fragmented by the necessity of dealing with the 'stuff' of surviving. In order to build a lifestyle of material efficiency on this earth man gradually immersed himself into I-it activity to the exclusion of I-thou activity. Man ceased being as 'altogether' as he once was. The I-it act is the basis of technology. Man directed his new found technologies to the purpose of enhancing his I-it relationship to the material world and thus became gradually less culturally able to experience otherness as technology took the place of other-sensitivity in his life. Otherness requires that the participants deal with each other in the starkly honest confrontation between their beings. A technology does not help in controlling the Other but it does help in blunting man's sensitivity to the Other. Otherness requires that the participants be altogether while technology ( in the service of the I-it relation. ) demands fragmentation.

Nature was no longer seen as an occasion for theophany. Nature was gradually no longer rever-

enced, but raped. Man's tools, directed as they were toward the making of products ( instead of man ), limited his understanding and sensitivity to otherness in other beings. Technology was corroding man's ability to be other.

There were still vast areas though, in which man had not invented technologies capable of dispelling otherness. These last vestiges of otherness became the realm of magic and superstition. Man was able to organize the meaning of the events that transcended his control by technologizing religion and art. He made his religion into a stereotyped system of repeatable rituals and convenient dogmas. He made his art into that realm where madness and other manifestations could be tolerated without damage to the growing it-culture. Hence religion served to de-void the Other of a voice, and art was placed so that otherness could not be effective socially. A great happening such as a natural disaster which evoked otherness was mediated to the masses through the it-culture's religion as proof that the Other stood behind 'his' government on some policy. The Other had lost the possibility of speaking to man because man had managed to seal off his culture from otherness. God, the Other, was dead. In fact though, it was not Being that died, but 'human' being. Man had

become culturally incapable of otherness, and hence of awe, wonder, and art. To be an other in today's contemporary cultures takes immense psychic and physical energy. Most men do not have that type of energy or direction. Most men's otherness is now present only in that ever shortening period before their culture starts transforming them --i.e, their childhood. Children are allowed to wonder, but men are to be only curious.

People were bringing little children to him, for him to touch them. The disciples turned them away, but when Jesus saw this he was indignant and said to them, 'Let the little children come to me; do not stop them; for it is to such as these that the kingdom of God belongs. I tell you solemnly, anyone who does not welcome the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it.' Then he put his arms around them, laid his hands on them and gave them his blessing.

Mark 10: 13-16

It has taken man many centuries to understand that he has killed god by fragmenting his own otherness. Man was practicing technological exorcism of otherness with relative unconsciousness for many centuries. Reality was narrowed to include only that which was measurable. Otherness gradually became unreal and was denied existence in the it-culture. Otherness became a type of psychological disease which could be treated by new techniques each year to bring the person back to 'normality'. Creativity



became an aberration unless it was harnessed to the augmentation of some acceptable 'product'. Having a sense of one's own being and destiny became having a 'messianic complex'. Otherness has become 'outlaw'.

Only children and lovers, both subjects of passing 'phases', are still permitted feelings of wonder and awe in our culture without serious social consequences. This is because technical man knows that the lover or the child will 'out grow' this unrealistic understanding of life. But technical man has been stung by the waste of time by both the lover and the child in their 'naivete' and 'unproductiveness'. Technical man is in the process of inventing new techniques to make the wasted time ( the ambience of wonder ) of love and childhood into productive periods -- productivity that will relate the child and lover more efficiently to the it-culture. A legion of sex manuals has been issued in order that the sexual acts of the lovers might be more pleasurable. And Masters and Johnson have devised a means by which we can 'measure' the intensity of the 'pleasure' so that we can be more 'scientific' about 'loving'. Technical man has also designed toys that 'teach' so that the child does not 'waste' his time in unproductive fantasy... which might ruin his delicate psychic balance. Love and childhood is approved of to the extent that it helps its 'participants' enter the technological society more 'productively'. To the

extent that love or childhood is simply wonderful it is counter-productive to the it-culture. In fact, Orwell's 1984 outlaws love for its counter-productive effects. Loving has been absorbed into the it-culture by making it that area where man can 'let off steam' so that he can come back to his job and be more effective. Increasingly a wife's role is that of 'mistress' rather than mother ( since children are liabilities to the territorial imperative ) or companion ( since a wife cannot talk about meaningful things with her husband as she does not share the same job he does ). The commercial market is flooded with cosmetics by which the ordinary woman may technically aspire to look like this year's ideal woman. In short, woman has lost her social dimension as a human being.

Art has also been thoroughly technologized -- exorcised of otherness. Art making is subject to the responsibilities of making a 'proper' object -- something that is 'tasteful'. Art making is subject to the responsibilities of being a 'proper' investment -- it must be durable so that when it is put in the vaults it will hold and increase its value. Art making is subject to various ideologies -- it is to be an 'accurate' expression of a world-view. The political left uses art to illustrate its hopeless adolescence, while the political right uses it to

glamorize the status-quo. Art is subject to the responsibilities of being 'decent' entertainment -- it must have 'socially redeeming qualities'. But the one thing that art is no longer subject to in this society is Being. without Being there is no art. There are only various species of illustrating the inside of our technological ghetto.

Otherness is a lost dimension for technological man. It is the absence of otherness that makes our culture's understanding of art, religion, love, and childhood false. Otherness is the mode in which man's spirit is evoked, matured, inflamed. The element which makes us essentially different than the apes is that we can rationally evolve otherness into our social life. Yet most men lack even the social evolution of the apes in this area. We have only become a better species of tool-making ape.

The it-culture exorcised otherness in a fairly unconscious manner in general. But there was a conscious eroding of those elements which made otherness viable in the culture. This conscious erosion started with the degeneration of the understanding of myth to fact and reached its early high point in the invention of 'idea' by Plato. It is necessary to locate the growth of the it-culture as closely as possible in order that we have a better perspective on the place of otherness in the contemporary world.

As the spell of scientific or quasi-scientific thought has spread in our culture from the physical to the so-called behavioral sciences, and finally to scholarship in the arts and letters, the marked tendency has been to consign whatever is not fully and articulately available in the waking consciousness for empirical or mathematical manipulation, to a purely negative catch-all category ( in effect, the cultural garbage can ) called the "unconscious"...or the "irrational"...or the "purely subjective". To behave on the basis of such blurred states of consciousness is at best to be some species of amusing eccentric, at worst to be plain mad. Conversely, behavior that is normal, valuable, productive, mentally healthy, socially respectable, intellectually defensible, sane, decent, and practical is supposed to have nothing to do with subjectivity. When we tell one another to "be reasonable", to "talk sense", to "get down to brass tacks", to "keep one's feet on the ground", "to stick to the facts", to be "realistic", we mean that one should avoid talking about one's "inner" feelings and look at the world rather in the way an engineer looks at a construction project or a physicist views the behavior of atomic particles. We feel that worthwhile things come of such a state of mind -- knowledge, solutions to problems, successful projects, money, power -- whereas only some manner of unproductive self-indulgence comes of wallowing in "mere feelings". The more sophisticated may admit the legitimacy of allowing artists to moon and day-dream. But the world, as every practical man knows, can do without poems and paintings; it can scarcely do without dams and roads and bombs and sound policy. Art is for the leisure hours: the time left over from dealing with realities and necessities.

Theodore Roszak

( The Making Of A Counter Culture, p. 53 )

The more we delineate the absence of the other and the reasons why the other is absent the more we will prepare for the reincarnation and evolution of otherness in society.

### Section III

#### Truth As It And Truth As Other

##### Introduction

Art alone can enable our consciousness to live out its irrealization in a world which belongs to it, and to it alone. From Siger de Brabant to Bacon, from Descartes to Hegel, Western thought has succumbed to the Greek compulsion to establish at any cost an enclosed form, to confound being and knowing, to do away with transcendence.

The great moment has come to escape from the two successive bottlenecks of Socrates and of the positivist rationalization of experience.

A metaphysics of liberty is being superseded by a metaphysics of vacuum, of risk, of detachment and finally of emergence, in which a dynamic and contradictory duality of cosmos and chaos becomes the essence of Being.

After seven centuries during which the quest for evidence has hidden truth from us, our Western world is finding the road to its veritable vocation. Never has there been such good reason to hope for the best.

Georges Mathieu

( A Critical Anthology Of The Art Of Painting In The Twentieth Century, ed. Seghers and Charpier, Hawthorne Books Inc., 1965. p. 286 )

What has happened? What is at work in the work of art? Revelation, aletheia, truth. A work of art does not so much reveal what this or that individual thing is as it discloses to us the essential nature and structure of the whole world. The simpler, the purer, the more primordial and unadorned the work, the more immediately and inevitably it does so. In its way, the work of art opens up the Being of what is. This opening up or disclosure is the happening of truth. The essence of the work of art is thus the unfolding of truth. Art is truth at work.

Laszlo Versenyi

( Heidegger, Being, and Truth, 1966 )

Art is the 'happening of truth' but, truth no longer happens in Western thought -- it is produced. Truth, aletheia, and art are inseparable in the experience of otherness. The fate of truth in Western thought also affects the fate of art. For this reason we now study how aletheia ( the type of truth proper to otherness ) was banished from the relationships which men have. Aletheia is the concern of this thesis because it is the type of truth that is present in the holy. To treat the loss of aletheia is to explore the path taken by the disappearing holy. It is necessary to explore the type of truth relationships that are viable in the it-culture if we are to propose alternatives.

The following quote sets the stage for the disappearance of the holy by introducing both participants ( aletheia and eidos ) and their relationship.

What was the relationship between Being and idea in Greek thought prior to Plato? According to Heidegger the Greeks originally experienced Being as physis, as "the power that emerges" in that which is. Physis was Being encountered as emerging from concealment, as spontaneously unfolding itself and lingering; it was the over-powering shining-forth of Being from beings. Physis was Being as it initially blazed forth from the phainomenon in a splendor of hiddenness (aletheia). This shining-forth was a standing-forth-in-the-light; it was an appearing. Appearance belonged to Being itself; appearance lay in the very essence of Being. Being meant appearing. Here, appearance was understood not in the sense of a mere seeming, but as a coming-to-presence. For something to appear was for it to expose itself in its Being. It was such appearance that the earlier Greeks called eidos or idea. Idea was the shining of the Being of beings. Being disclosed itself as eidos and idea.

(cont.)

Appearance, or idea, was "a definite mode of emerging self-manifestation," i.e., of physis. Idea, then, was a mode or determination of Being.

This understanding of idea altered in Plato's philosophy where physis gave way to idea as the dominant interpretation of Being. The idea, as the appearance of the being, "came to constitute its what," i.e., its essence. Idea, as whatness, became the Being of the being; it became that which was most Beingful in the being. Idea, which had originally been the appearing of being as illuminated by Being, came to be construed as the whole of Being. Idea became the one-only locus of Being. Being, as idea or essence, was then separated from the being; the on became distinct from the phainomenon. The phainomenon, devoid of Being, ceased to be regarded as that which appears, that which reveals itself, and was now looked upon as mere appearance, i.e., as semblance and unreality. Being, conceived solely as stable, unchanging idea, was exalted by Platonism to a suprasensory realm "somewhere on high," and at the same time the phenomenal world was degraded and declared to be one of mere appearance,-- an only seeming world. Man was dwelling in a fleeting, ephemeral world of becoming or non-Being -- a world of sensible things which shared in Being only to the extent that they were in some way illuminated by, or assimilated to, eternal essences which alone were fully real but which existed in a world apart from the phenomenal....

Giles Driscoll

( "Heidegger: A Response To Nihilism", Philosophy Today, Vol.XI,n.1, Spring 1967, pp. 18-19 )

Descartes told Western man that the most certain thing he could know was his own thinking process. In doing so Descartes rendered anything outside of his own process 'suspect'. Kant told Western man that he could not know anything in itself. Descartes eliminated the presence of otherness and Kant eliminated the source of otherness. Shortly afterwards Nietzsche declared the possibility of otherness to be dead... and the twentieth century proved it.

## Descriptions of Aletheia

We must rely on a description of experiences of aletheia rather than a definition of them. Aletheia is incarnated truth and as such is as broad as carnate reality. Aletheia is also the way of otherness and as such is larger than me. Because aletheia is broader and higher than me I cannot set limits on it. (i.e., define) it to understand it. Aletheia must be described by my being part of it. This is the reason why only artists can mediate aletheia and why we are here dependent upon a poem to describe it to us.

### The Rising

You are so beautiful I don't know where to look.  
I am ashamed.  
Like the unspeakable name of God,  
bitter and new,  
naked even of pleasure.

Julia Vinograd

( The Young American Poets, ed. Carroll, A Big Table Book, 1968, p.460)

Beauty is not a comfortable experience in this poem. Beauty is a quality of the other that makes me feel ashamed. Beauty is the name that is evoked from a human being to describe the revelation of otherness in aletheia.



In experiences of episteme, which are the dominant mode of beauty in our culture, beauty is that which 'comforts' or 'conforms' to my feelings of how things 'should' appear. An episteme experience of beauty is reassuring -- it does not challenge the status-quo. An aletheia experience of beauty challenges all that is not in the process of evolving ultimate value in my 'being-in-the-world'. Aletheia conjures guilt from my being for not being more other. Episteme congratulates my being for being less other.

The experience of beauty in this poem is a loving experience ( hence one of aletheia and otherness ). The poetess cannot be objective about the one she is describing in the poem since she is not an object to that one, but a subject. The poetess can only describe the inward progress of deepening communion with the other by the poem. The lack of episteme objectiveness is a mark of the presence of aletheia. Aletheia has its rectitude from being open to the other, while episteme has its from a closed, systematic ordering of knowledge-objects. The lack of epistemological order in experiences of aletheia incites the poetess to wonder, awe, and the completion of the poem in her life. The lack of epistemological order for

the epistemologist in aletheia experiences leads him to discount them as 'strange', 'wierd', and 'incongruous'.

In episteme experiences of beauty the artifact is seen as an expression of the viewer's or the artist's world. The artist is considered meritorious to the extent that he has either correctly anticipated and expressed the conventionalized sensitivities of his audience, or sold the audience his world as a piece of the culture market. In both instances otherness is forsaken in the relationship between the artist and the audience. Episteme art is illustration. Illustration deals with two known elements. We know what the object is that we are weaving a mystique around, and we know how to use our art stereotypes to portray explicit and implicit value judgments about the object to the viewer. Illustration is a form of propaganda explicitly or implicitly. An illustration may strike us as being 'objective' -- just a matter of information -- but that piece of information orients us to a social structure that makes meaning out of that sign. By accepting the sign we are accepting the structure that conveys the meaning of the sign. The meaning structure out of which the sign arises has been illustrated to us implicitly. We have been captured by the conventional.

In aletheia experiences of beauty the structure of the artifact is determined by the presence of the other. We don't have to construct conventional structures on which to hang the presence of the other so as to make sense out of it -- as we try to do in illustration. The other is immediately meaningful and true in its presence. The meaning for the presence of the other does not have to be conventionally established as it is already primordially present in human 'being'. The lack of understanding for art in our culture is not because of the new forms and directions which art has taken but rather, because man is no longer in contact with his own human 'being'. Man is no longer capable enough of otherness to allow Being to resonate in his human 'being'. Our culture has so fragmented man that hardly anything can reach his humanity.

When aletheia strikes us it opens our human 'being' to Being. Our human 'being' is awed at the presence of Being and ashamed of its own wasted opportunities to be more like Being. Aletheia is bitter and new for man. An experience of otherness is not comfortable since it judges us and lets us feel the weight of the distance we have yet to grow.

We have consulted a poetess for a description of aletheia. Now we will consult a philosopher who is trying to again give birth to Being in

conventional language.. The German philosopher Martin Heidegger has brought the relationship of aletheia and art to the foreground in contemporary thinking. His thinking is summarized by Laszlo Versenyi in his book Heidegger, Being, and Truth of 1966. The following is excerpted from the book.

Delivering us from the yoke of custom and convention, art transports us into a new realm: that of essential truth, the disclosure of Being. Art gives no knowledge for or impetus toward controlling the things of the world we are so fatally involved with. Rather, 'it changes our usual relationships to the world' and arrests our everyday public existence, lifts us ecstatically out of our obliviousness to the essential, and makes us succumb to and dwell in the original disclosure of Being. This alone accounts for the fact that art is characterized by beauty. For beauty is not a matter of pleasing some sort of special aesthetic sense. Aesthetics as a particular discipline among others can never say what beauty is .... To be beautiful in Greek, as well as in German, means to shine, gleam, blaze forth, to appear in the light, to be revealed in one's essential nature, to be disclosed in one's true Being. Beauty is disclosure. That is why Being and beauty belong together. For Being is that which is most disclosed, the ground of all disclosure, disclosure itself as such. Beauty, Being, and Truth are but so many names for the same thing: original disclosure.

## Definitions of Episteme

There are two dominant types of episteme experiences in our culture. The 'objective' use of episteme is 'classicism'. The 'subjective' use of episteme is 'technology'. We have looked at episteme as a form of the I-it relationship in an earlier section of this paper. We have also drawn some distinctions between episteme and aletheia as they change the nature of what we call beautiful. Consequently, it seems that it will suffice in this section to merely define episteme and then give its two dominant cultural manifestations expression.

ep.i.ste.me / ( Gk episteme understanding, knowledge, fr. fem. of epistemon understanding, knowing, fr. epistanai to understand, know, fr. epi and histanai to set, place-- more at Stand ): Knowledge; specif: intellectually certain knowledge.

Episteme does not admit to open-ended situations. Consequently episteme is unable to express otherness. we do not involve our whole being in the epistemological knowing process as we do in aletheia. We are not present to the known as an other but as the director of an epistemological system of conventionalized meanings. Since we are not present as other neither is that to which we are addressing our epistemological system. We must siphon off the otherness that

makes each being unique so that the being in question will fit the pre-formed categories of epistemology. We gain knowledge of the shell the being inhabits only. The being we are knowing epistemologically ceases to be a being and becomes an object to us. We can have precise epistemological knowledge because we have excluded that realm which transcends episteme from the realm of the knowable. In epistemological knowing we assign the hierarchies of value to the beings being known. In aletheia knowing ( or poesis ) the other reveals its value to us. The being we know in aletheia has its own living principle of ordering its material characteristics that epistemology is not able to cope with. Consequently, epistemology rapes being of its otherness for the sake of its temporal quantification. . . .

Epistemology is a neutral element as far as being is concerned. When epistemology is a positive enhancement of Being it is directed by aletheia. In this paper I have been using episteme as if it were a detriment to Being since the way our culture uses it makes it so. The two prime detrimental uses of episteme in our culture are 'classicism' and 'technology'. These are two examples of how contemporary man refuses to let Being be in beings. Epistemology must be ordered and directed by aletheia if otherness is to ever be socially present.

## Classicism

Heidegger lists idea, paradeigma, homoiosis and mimesis as being the basic concepts behind classicism -- "assimilation, accommodation, orientation by" -- in a word: imitation. Classicism, understood in the broadest and most naive sense, would encompass, then, every cultural movement characterized by the infusing of value into realities by way of approximating them to some objective ideal -- be it an ideal inherited from antiquity, one revealed from above, or simply a crudely Platonic 'Idea in the sky'. Classicism, so conceived, includes every major cultural tendency of Western civilization previous to the Enlightenment. Hellenism, Scholasticism and Gothicism, the humanism of the Renaissance -- all fall within the ambit of classicism. So also do the Romanticisms of the past two centuries.

Giles Driscoll

( "Heidegger: A Response To Nihilism", p. 19-20 )

The appearance of episteme as classicism relies on the person who is doing the imitating having an ideal. The classicist does not let Being be in beings since this would destroy his manipulation of those same beings in the service of his ideal. The man who has enough power to force other beings to become parts of his ideal has taken the place of Being. That man is playing god. But as Nietzsche told us, " God is dead...Long live the Superman!"

The presence of otherness has no place in a society which does not let Being be in beings. At least it has no apparent place. But otherness is present in this culture by its absence in the feelings of alienation, boredom, meaninglessness, and despair.

## Technology

Technology differs from classicism in one major respect. In classicism there is an ideal which is 'objective', i.e., 'out there', 'beyond the individual who has given himself to it'. In technology there is no ideal. Technology considers any 'out there' to be either irrelevant or not real. The classical man despoils beings of their presence by manipulating them in the service of some ideal. The technological man despoils beings of their presence by manipulating them according to his own will. Classicism imposes the restraints of the ideal on the person who holds it. Technology imposes no restraint other than power. If the technologist is powerful enough he may conceivably dominate all other beings in the world and direct them to the extension of his will.

Classicism recognizes the existence of Being but fails to let Being be in beings. Technology does not recognize that Being has any right to existence in beings. The ethical ramifications of this are immense. The classical man had a sense of honor and integrity even though it might have been severely limited by his idealized idea of man and action. Technological man has nothing to bolster integrity or honor since there is nothing outside



of his own will that has relevance to his action unless the outside element is more physically powerful. The morality of the technological man or nation is that of the majority or public opinion. Public opinion in the technological societies is conditioned to give positive responses to success measured in quantitative terms. A good example of a technological success conditioning public opinion in favor of the power that used the technology to gain the success is the nuclear bomb. We should despise not only the use of this deadly bomb but the invention of it, and the perverted mentality that sees it as a benefit for mankind. Instead we 'won' the war with its use, 'saved the world' from communism with its presence, and 'maintain peace' by its threat. All of these atrocities of the bomb parade under the banner of humanitarian success. The technologist has no honor or integrity other than what the limits of his technical power make. Public opinion, probably one of the last restraints on the use of power by an individual, is now able to be conditioned to accept almost any action. The only morality that is presently viable in a technological society is that which is useful for technological efficiency. Morality which is not technically efficient is said to be 'superstitious' or 'retrogressive' and hence void. We have replaced both god and man with the machine.

## Section IV

### The Relevance Of The Holy

The holy is the presence of the other. Being is the power source of all otherness. It is necessary to start with Being if we are to construct an alternative manner of living to the one our technological culture has given us. Art is the natural place to start to build a counter culture based on the presence of Being. Art is Being's effective presence to beings. It is no accident that the first priests and prophets were artists. The effective mediation of Being to beings demanded a mediator who could mold material existence to reveal otherness.

Unfortunately the artist-priest-prophet identity has been excluded from our technological world. Today we see those people known as priests in our culture generally lending ethical support to the rationalized atrocities of the technological culture. Seldom do those who are now called priests give Being a voice through their actions. Indeed the present day minister of religion belongs to the society rather than to Being. If and when a minister of religion gives his voice to Being he incurs some type of social reprimand. As we have seen earlier Being is not only unwelcome but detrimental to the productivity of our it-culture. It is painfully apparent why the religious department of a technological society is not

in the service of Being. The loss of Being has also meant that art, prophecy, and religion are no longer connected and mutually deepened in our it-culture. The loss of Being means that the it-culture has lost ultimate direction and meaning. Unfortunately for human 'being' when a man does give himself to Being for beings he almost automatically excludes his effectiveness in the social life of his culture.

The artist has also suffered from his alienation from Being. The artist incurs a position in the it-culture at the expense of his role as priest and prophet. The effect of this alienation from Being and consequent loss of priesthood and prophecy for the artist is that he becomes nothing more than some type of illustrator. The artist loses the depth and meaning that only Being can grant him when he becomes established in the technological culture.

The prophet has also hit upon hard times with the loss of Being. Our it-culture thinks that prophecy is some species of fortune telling. In reality a prophet's role has to do more with the past than with the future. The prophet is the one who calls his society back to the essentials of being human. The prophet warns his people that unless they repent of their neglect of Being they will suffer the consequences of their present actions in the

future. The prophecy in some contemporary philosophy and art is culturally non-viable because it is in the service of Being and the culture is in the service of technology. For the comfort of the prophet and the discomfort of the it-society, it must be noted that prophets are usually not heeded until after the devastation they predicted actually happened. For the consideration of all of us it must be noted that if the current prediction of doom actually takes place there will probably be no afterwards in which we may review our neglected prophecies.

If we are to establish human 'being' in our culture we must first establish the presence of Being in society. The presence of Being to beings is holy. The holy is the presence of otherness. Being and Other are different methodology's names for the same presence as has been indicated in this paper. The mode of Being to beings in society is the artist-priest-prophet. This social mode of Being is the 'shepherd of Being'. Before Being's presence may be present to beings men must give themselves over to otherness in the role of artist-priest-prophet. The task of these 'shepherds of Being' is then to make paths by which Being can be in, with, and through beings. In short the task of the shepherds is that of making men holy by letting Being be for them.

The task of giving Being a voice for beings is

immensely difficult because modes of otherness have almost been completely removed from our culture. Otherness modes were attacked from a twofold position. First aletheia was lost to man, and then man lost his ability to be an integral being. As we have seen, man must be integrally human before he can discover otherness and be open to aletheia. By concerning ourselves with aletheia modes of human integration we will be dislodging the cornerstone of the technological society. Technological society is based on episteme and the fragmentation of human 'being' into 'jobs'. The making of Being present in beings is the start of the gentle revolution of the holy.

Making men into participants of Being demands more than just the absence of the technological society. Man is not the noble savage. An alternative culture based on integral human 'being' and aletheia must be established if we are to escape the cultural cycles of the tool-maker ape. We do not need and probably cannot afford another cycle of technically improved societies. For the sake of human 'being' we must have a society based on Being.

If such a culture is to be built otherness must be gradually established in human 'being-in-the-world'. Cultural systems are neutral. They may be either humane or inhumane depending upon the humanity of the

men who administer them. To evolve human 'being' one must evolve Being in beings first.

I am trying to establish grounds for the intellectual espousal of Being by my readers in this paper. The remainder of this paper deals with my work in the service of making Being more socially viable in my art. Both my intellectual investigations and my art exist for the establishment of otherness. My explorations of Being will gain depth and effectiveness to the extent that my own human 'being-in-the-world' admits to more otherness. Otherness is the power of the holy. In the final analysis the art of Being is man's natural spirituality and the artist is Being's natural priest-prophet.